

# The Elementary English Review

VOL. XIX

OCTOBER 1942

No. 6

CHILDREN'S BOOK WEEK

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SPECIAL NUMBER

## Children's Books and Reading

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The Elementary English Review Transferred to  
N. C. T. E. . . . . W. WILBUR HATFIELD  
This Year's Books for Children

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# The Elementary English Review

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# THE ELEMENTARY ENGLISH REVIEW

VOL. XIX

OCTOBER 1942

No. 6

## The Significance of Discriminate Reading\*

MILDRED A. DAWSON  
*The University of Tennessee  
Knoxville*

IN CONSIDERING the implications of the defense of American tradition to the teacher of English in the elementary school, we are particularly concerned with the opportunities the child should have to read discriminately. When we sort from the topic suggested the major concepts, and place them in juxtaposition in order to identify interrelationships of real significance, it seems that we are being asked to ponder the imponderable. Consider, for instance, each of the following concepts: the *American tradition*, the *defense* of such tradition, the *implications* of this defense—especially the implications for the *teacher of English in the elementary school*, and still more particularly the implications that make requisite *opportunities for the child to read discriminately*. It all sounds very complicated—and so it is, to an extreme degree—and great complexity all too often tempts us to speak in beautiful, glowing generalities that afford little genuine guidance or stimulation to purposeful direct action.

Let us, therefore, briefly define the concepts in the major thesis or theme in

order that we may suggest specific viewpoints, principles, and policies to guide our teaching of thoughtful, fruitful, discriminating reading. The *American tradition* relates to our constitutional freedom of thought, of action, of speech, of press, of beliefs—whether political, religious, ethical, or moral—so long as we do not infringe on the rights of others. Likewise, it includes universal education, respect for womanhood, personal initiative geared to a feeling of social responsibility and co-operative enterprise. Thus, America aspires to be a democracy in truth where an intelligent informed, actively interested citizenry co-operatively determines policies and programs involving home and neighborhood, church, school, the press, and social and civic groups including the state. The term *defense* connotes the present peril which the aggressor nations have brought upon us. For the first time in American history we fear that democracy, with all its personal and social privileges and responsibilities, may be swept from the face of the earth. At

\* Read before the Elementary Section of The National Council of Teachers of English, Nov. 22, 1941. The topic for general discussion was "Implications of the Defense of American Tradition to the Teacher of English in the Elementary School."

last, we are aroused to an appreciation of what democracy can and should mean, and are being stirred to active measures of defense.

Now, what are the implications of the defense of American tradition to the teacher of elementary school English? Wherein lie the opportunities for reading discriminatingly which every child should be given? To these two questions will the remainder of this paper be devoted.

Only as we consider the nature of learning and the course of child development can we clearly see the implications which the English teacher should perceive as she plays her professional part in the national defense program. For instance, living organisms learn through experiencing; therefore, the child can sense the American tradition only as he lives and acts according to that tradition: he will read discriminatingly only to the extent that he has genuine occasion to exercise discrimination as he selects materials according to their relative importance, pertinence, and forms judgments that lead to decisive action. In the second place, the child's learning is developmental—conditioned both by his maturation and the galaxy of experiences that contribute to his growth, his habitual responses and attitudes, and the richness of his ideational world. According to Lane<sup>1</sup>, as the child

grows older and wiser, he modifies his conduct, his behavior, the texture of his experience to the demands of his environment and finds that such modification makes life easier, more simple, and more satisfactory . . . . As the child modifies his conduct through adaptation to his environment, he forms rather definite *patterns* of behavior . . . . Each of his acts, in its earliest form, presented a major problem to him, but by constant practice he is able to relegate each act to a purely mechanical process which involves little or no conscious thought, leaving him free for more important things.

<sup>1</sup> Robert Hill Lane. *The Progressive Elementary School*, Houghton, 1938. P. 3.

In terms of the reading process, the child, through repeated demands for discriminating reading, becomes accustomed to careful, selective reading, is habitually thoughtful as he uses reading in work situations, and therefore is able to devote his undivided attention to the ideas which he is trying to glean from the printed page. Habits of work, habits of thinking must be gained if the child is to read fluently and comprehendingly, with optimum enjoyment and all due appreciation, the printed materials that are grist to his education mill.

With this bit of philosophizing behind us, let us look forward to the opportunities for discriminating reading which should come to elementary school children. One aspect of such reading is the ability and inclination to select the most worthy, valuable, and authentic of the publications that are available for their use. The connotation here is that children should have a wide variety of printed materials in whose use and evaluation the teacher should guide them. In the words of the *Thirty-Sixth Yearbook*.

As pupils secure experience through wide reading, they should learn to compare information and ideas from many sources and pass judgment on their value and significance. They should learn to weigh evidence presented and distinguish what is sound and relevant from what is not. They should also learn to recognize the underlying meaning and implications of the statements made. In the field of recreational reading, pupils should be guided in selecting from the books and magazines read that which is interesting and satisfying to them. Through discussions, dramatizations, visual aids, and other means pupils may be led to judge the beauty and worth of good literature, as against the commonplace and worthless. (page 115)

The selection and the increasingly discriminating preference for the best of available printed materials is but one aspect of a program affording opportunities for discriminating reading. A second

phase is guidance in adapting his mode of reading to the purpose at hand. For instance, whether a pupil skims, reads in a cursory fashion, or studies passages in a deliberate, concentrated fashion should depend on his purpose for reading at all. If he is seeking a general idea of the pertinence of an article to a specific problem, if he is scanning to find passages to defend his viewpoint, if he is trying to comprehend and interpret totally unfamiliar but decidedly valuable materials for any of these if's, he will use modes of attack quite different from those used for the others. In carrying on a reading program related to activities on the various areas of experience (or subject matter), the pupils will inevitably read for many different purposes. Whenever, in reading for any one of these specific purposes, the child employs inappropriate ways of reading or uses them altogether too inexpertly, he should be guided to greater efficiency—according to the *Thirty-Sixth Yearbook*. Some of the purposes appropriate to pupils in the elementary school are:

- To answer specific questions.
- To follow directions with reasonable speed and accuracy.
- To remember what is read.
- To find the central thought.
- To follow the sequence of related events.
- To find the most important points and supporting details.
- To select the facts that definitely relate to a problem.
- To determine essential conditions of a problem.
- To find facts supporting a point of view.
- To judge the validity of statements.
- To draw valid conclusions from the materials read.
- To determine the aim of the author.
- To discover problems for additional study.
- To enjoy facts or stories presented.

Perhaps it will be appropriate to warn teachers and supervisors, who are interested in developing the ability to read discriminately so far as adaption to

varying purposes is concerned, that the purposes must be genuine, that they must grow out of the on-going, active experiences and needs of the children. After all, pupils will become customarily purposeful only as they sense and act upon the purposes which normally arise in the classroom and out-of-school living. The teacher who directs pupils in their adaptation of reading according to self-identified purposes should go far toward developing the ability and the tendency to read discriminately.

A third aspect of discriminating reading lies in the ability to detect and evaluate propaganda. Pupils should learn to ask themselves: Why would this man have written this book or article? Was he prejudiced? Did he want to create certain impressions and attitudes for political or economic reasons? Did he know his subject? How can I be sure? Did he tell only a part or one side of an issue? Thus, through comparing the materials at hand and determining the relative objectivity and competence of the writers, pupils may become able to determine what is authentic and what is unduly colored or distorted.

Now that the world is at war, children (and their teachers, for that matter) are constantly confronted by propaganda. Only by reading widely, comparing the statements made, and referring to relatively authentic sources, by checking on the motives and the competence of writers, can children gain the ability to read discriminately the newspapers, magazines, and books that are written for or against the policies and programs of rival parties, social organizations, civic bureaus, and nations.

Necessarily, the American tradition can be defended successfully only as children learn to read discriminately the floods of material everywhere available.

# Miss Alcott's Reception

## A Book Week Program

MARY BLOSSER

*Library Teacher, Talcott School, Chicago*

EVERYONE was busy about the first of November and the library teacher had not thought much about Book Week. Then one morning, there Book Week was, looming ahead of her, one week away.

"We can't do much now," she said, "but, of course, we can always have a book character parade."

"If a parade," suggested the principal, "why not in the assembly hall, where each character may be seen to advantage?"

"Why not?" the library teacher replied, and began preparations then and there.

There was eagerness on the part of the children and such fine co-operation from the faculty of the school that plans for the assembly grew as ideas took form. The book character parade underwent a metamorphosis in the process, emerging as a reception to be given by Miss Louisa M. Alcott in honor of Mr. Robert Louis Stevenson to one hundred and fifty best-loved characters of children's literature.

At the outset it was agreed that participation in the assembly should be voluntary, none but the three leading characters to be chosen by the teachers, and that a child impersonating a character must have read the book in which the character is portrayed. Some exceptions to this latter rule were permitted, however. Primary children might, if they wished, base their choices on interests which had arisen as a result of the story-telling hour. Exceptions were also made for a few very retarded readers and for children of the sight-saving classes.

Sam, an eighth-grade boy with reading

ability of about fourth-grade, owned a Boy Scout suit. He was very proud of this suit and was bursting with desire to take part in the assembly wearing it. On the afternoon of the day preceding the program he came to the library to ask for *Boy Scouts of Grand Canyon* in the hope that he might read the book that night. The book, which would have been difficult reading for Sam, was out—and we had nothing else about Scouts which would fill the bill. His disappointment was more than the library teacher could bear.

"You've done your best to get hold of the book, Sam," she said, "so plan to go on the stage tomorrow with the others and we'll let you read the book next week when it returns."

So it was arranged that way and both Sam and the library teacher felt better because of the adjustment made.

Billy of the sight-saving room owned a brand new elephant costume which he had worn to celebrate the Hallowe'en festivities. As soon as we saw it we cried, *Kari, the Elephant!* Billy's eye difficulties did not permit of his reading the book, of course, but he persuaded his homeroom teacher to read it to the class—and so he became qualified to attend Miss Alcott's reception after all.

To be sure there was a worrisome time when Billy came to the library teacher with a troubled look and the announcement that his dog, who was evidently no respecter of jungle beasts, had chewed a piece out of the seat of Kari's costume.

"But it can be mended, Billy," the library teacher assured him.



"But my mother mended it with white cloth," he objected, "and it will show. An elephant doesn't have a white spot."

And neither does it. So word was sent to Billy's mother that a patch would be unnecessary and that just a seam would save the day for Kari.

It had been previously agreed that each child would plan his costume according to his own interpretation of what he had read, consultation with a teacher being permitted, of course. The possession of a costume proved an incentive to the reading of a new book even with the more gifted and well-read children. If one had a perfectly charming costume and liked to read, anyway, it was more enjoyable, and simpler, too, to find and read a book to suit the dress than to plan a costume, however unpretentious, for a book previously read.

Norabelle, a seventh-grade girl, was much interested in books and reading. Tall and nice-looking, she "modeled" for us one day in the costume of a Spanish princess. She had read nothing about Spanish royalty and we had at the time no novel on the subject in our library. But the public library produced one, and Norabelle went home happily to spend a week-end with *Miranda is a Princess*.

The assembly proper was in the nature of creative dramatics—no parts being assigned for memorization. Except for the few leading characters, no child had been on the stage or to the assembly in preparation for the event. Miss Alcott and the butler<sup>1</sup> took places on the stage before the curtain rose, but of the one hundred and fifty other characters who were to attend the reception, each remained seated with his homeroom until the time drew near for him to appear as a guest at the party. Each was thus in turn a par-

ticipant in the audience situation and in the performer's rôle. Each, too, as he left his homeroom to go upon the stage, experienced something of the thrill with which one might set off to attend a first real party. One eighth-grade girl, passing in the dark on her way to the reception, expressed this exhilaration as she whispered to the library teacher, "I'm just shivering with excitement!"

As a guest arrived upon the stage, he presented his "calling card" to the butler who announced his book-character name. Miss Alcott, a very well-read and versatile sixth-grade girl, received each arrival in her most gracious manner, and with whatever welcoming remarks seemed to her at the moment appropriate to the character. Her spontaneity was so disarming to the guests that many found themselves responding in kind.

Since no parts were written down or assigned, there remains no record of what was said that day at Miss Alcott's reception. Were it possible to reproduce the entire dialogue here, one could not by so doing bring the scene to life—for it was the eagerness of the children, the charm of little Miss Alcott's personality, her originality and versatility, that made the party something more than just make-believe to the boys and girls. Bits such as this, when the Little Women arrived, brought delight;

Why, hello, girls! How are you all today?

Let's see, is this Amy?

No-o! that's Meg!

Well, then, you must be Amy, aren't you?

No, I'm Jo.

You are? Well, that's funny because you know I wrote that book and now I can't pick out my own characters.

Some of the guests who attended the reception that day were talented and those who wished to do so had previously given Miss Alcott their names, signifying their willingness to give entertainment at

<sup>1</sup> The children imagined that Miss Alcott, grown famous through the success of *Little Women*, might, if she were giving a reception engage such a person to assist her at that time.



the party. So, from time to time, Miss Alcott livened matters by asking these children to share a dance, a song, or instrumental music. At last however, everyone from Ab, the Cave Boy to Admiral Byrd and Sue Barton had been duly received and entertained. And so came to an end Miss Alcott's reception, an affair, which contrary to the usual run of events at a reception proved enjoyable to every child who was in the audience or on the stage that day.

But the assembly did more than provide fun and entertainment. It had stimulated a lively interest in books and familiarized the children with personalities from these books. The very next day the requests began to come in,

"Do you have that book about *Kari, the Elephant?*"

"May I have *Mrs. Wiggs of the Cabbage Patch?*"

There were other benefits. Some of these underprivileged children may never attend a reception in real life, but if they should, we feel sure that they will know what is to be expected at such functions. Little Miss Alcott will never fail in the rôle of the charming hostess; and twelve-year-old Robert Louis Stevenson has acquired a little more than the rudiments of gallantry, for did he not delight his hostess by this sincere greeting, "Good afternoon, Miss Alcott, you are looking very lovely today."

As participation in the assembly was voluntary, and as no lines were memorized, many children took part in the program who had seldom, if ever, appeared in dramatics before. Some who had experienced little satisfaction in their own accomplishments achieved success that day.

Anthony, an eighth-grade boy, had long been a real problem. For some time life had been "just one scrape after another" for him. In fact, he had only recently returned to school after a period of expulsion. But he was interested in the Book Week assembly, and insisted upon appearing as Ab, the Cave Boy, clad in a few pieces of moth-eaten fur which his mother had hastily sewed together for him. It was a cold November day on which Miss Alcott received, and Anthony nearly froze despite the furs. Nevertheless, Ab, the Cave Boy "went over big," and Anthony had the admiration of the eighth-grade boys for his "nifty" costume.

Yes, everyone was very busy the first of November. The library teacher had not thought much about Book Week. Then one morning, there Book Week was, looming ahead of her, one week away. So, we couldn't do much. Still—Book Week at our school turned out pretty well, after all, for were there not the teachers and the principal and, best of all, the children to count upon!

### THE SIGNIFICANCE OF DISCRIMINATE READING

(Continued from page 193)

They will gain facility in so doing and the tendency to do so on all occasions only as teachers in the elementary school, year by year, help them to select the bet-

ter materials, to read with proper adaption to purpose, and to interpret in the light of the author's purpose and opportunity to know.

# Caroline Howard Gilman\*

EARL NOLAND SAUCIER

*East Texas State Teachers College  
Commerce, Texas*

A PIONEER in the field of children's periodicals, and the most outstanding Southern juvenile writer and editor of her day was Caroline Howard Gilman of Charleston, South Carolina. Yet today, she is scarcely known by name to the average student of children's literature, or to the student of Southern literature. She does not deserve the oblivion which threatens her name, for, although far from being a great writer, she was an important and significant writer in her field.<sup>1</sup> There are at least two reasons that suggest themselves for her eclipse. First, that she wrote a long time ago, and secondly, that she lived in the South prior to 1861; and many literary names in the South found their fame "gone with the wind" in 1865.

Caroline Howard, the youngest child of Samuel and Anna Lillie Howard, was born in Boston, Massachusetts, October 8, 1794 in "Mansion House." Her parents were of good New England stock, and family tradition said that Samuel, a neighbor and friend of Paul Revere, was one of the "Indians" who staged the Boston Tea Party.

Caroline's education was like that of most girls of her station then, an irregular training in reading and writing, with an occasional emphasis on some minor accomplishment such as china-painting, or music, or French. Very early, however, Caroline showed an interest in reading, and that she read many books entirely in advance of her years she does not ascribe entirely to her mature mind, but to lack of any children's books except a primer.

<sup>1</sup> A very full account of Mrs. Gilman's life and activities is to be found in a Peabody College thesis, "Caroline Howard Gilman," by Fanny Bell Wilson.

Her first poem was written when she was ten years old. Her idea had been to write an acrostic for a baby named Howard, but after the first three lines she found writing verse too hard a task to be complicated further by having to begin each line with a certain letter. Here is the rhyme:

How sweet is the half opened rose!  
Oh, how sweet is the violet in view!  
Who receives more pleasure from them,  
Than one who thinks them like you!  
Yes, yes, you're a sweet little rose,  
That will bloom like one awhile;  
And then you will be like one still,  
For I hope you will die without guile.

Notice how faithfully the labored little verses reflect the poetic fancies of the day. The child compared to the flowers—in one line to the "sweet little rose," the flower for which she was later to name her magazine; the idea that little children must not be sinful, and the morbid intrusion of the thought of death. Unfortunately these affectations and ideas portrayed in this little verse were to characterize the flood of verse to be written for children from 1800 to 1860.

Caroline's father died when Caroline was only three, and in 1805 her mother died, leaving Caroline to the care of her older sister Anna Maria Howard, afterward to be Mrs. White and the mother of Maria White, wife of James Russell Lowell.

From then until her marriage in 1819, Caroline lived a bookish life, with occasional religious flurries. She wrote a novel under the name of Eugenie Fitz-Allen; she joined the Episcopal Church, the church which in New England was supplanting

\*See also the article entitled "The Rose Bud," by Blanche Connelly Saucier, *The Elementary English Review*, December, 1941.

the Calvinistic faith; and she had published poems in the Boston papers. One of these, "Jepthah's Rash Vow," was the cause of her meeting the man she married, for Samuel Francis Gilman, a Harvard theological student, whose name now is kept green by his authorship of "Fair Harvard," recited the poem at a party where she was a guest. They were introduced, a courtship began which was soon followed by marriage.

The honeymoon was an overland trip of eleven days to their new home in Charleston, South Carolina, where Dr. Gilman was called to be pastor of the Unitarian Church. This was not Mrs. Gilman's first visit to the South, as she had spent four winters with her brother in Savannah, Georgia, and had come to love the South then, a love that never left her, but rather, increased with the years.

A strenuous life began for Mrs. Gilman. Not wearied in well doing, fulfilling her social obligations as a minister's wife, bearing and rearing four girls (a son died in infancy) she yet found time to keep up her interest in writing, and was one of the valued contributors to the *Juvenile Miscellany*, America's first periodical for children.

In 1832, Mrs. Gilman began the publication of the *Rose Bud*, the South's first periodical for children. The magazine was a moderate success, paying its way from the start. The close of that year found it with 735 subscribers. Publica-

tion continued until 1839, part of the time under the name of *Southern Rose Bud* and the *Southern Rose*. The press of other duties, plus increasingly heavy responsibilities entailed by the *Southern Rose* caused her to discontinue it then.

In her *Recollections of a Southern Matron* written in 1838, she said:

My only pride is in my books for children. I have never thought myself a poet, only a versifier; but I know that I have learned the way to youthful hearts, and I think I have originated several styles of writing for them.

And, in a letter to her sister dated December 3, 1834, she said of her poems:

I have many times thought of publishing them, but my standard is so high about poetry that I have shrunk back. Some reasons induce me to think of it now. It seems to me that though below Mrs. Sigourney's they are as good as Mrs. Gould's and better than Mrs. Follen's. . . . Another thing, too, seems as if the poem might be worth something:—one in circulation from the English press under Bryant's name. The other day I found one with Miss Howitt's name affixed, for which maybe she would not thank the appropriator.

In 1858, Dr. Gilman died, thus beginning the years of trial and sorrow for Mrs. Gilman. The War destroyed her home and her books, and estranged her from her relatives in the North. Her buoyant spirit would not be downed, but these years did stop her writing, and, although she lived to be ninety-four, she never again entered upon an active writing career. She died in Washington, D. C. in 1888.

# The "Noodle" Story

MARY ESTHER LOLLIS

*Brady School, Aurora, Illinois*

THE PAST six years I have daily faced a roomful of so called "naturals." Though these children have difficulties with the "three R's" and though their I. Q.'s are below those specified for the normal human mind, let me tell you that in many instances they are nobody's fools. Each can excel in something—music, drawing, painting, gym, manual arts, cooking or sewing; and if one "can't do anything" it is the teacher's fault in not discovering his special bent. The old law of compensation is still the great leveler. When it comes to trickery and guile, my opportunity folks rate high—possibly because their code of ethics is elementary.

My children love the noodle story. The weak outwit the strong, the poor the rich, and the very smart person becomes the foil of the very foolish one. Too much knowledge is often as definite a handicap as is too much material wealth. Blessed be nothing is the best motto for these folks. My charges, who spend their lives feeling inferior, here have the opportunity to feel superior to someone. Their amused smiles let one know *they* would never be so stupid.

The unnaturalness of situation in the noodle story enhances the charm. Children accept novelties with ease, and many things they enjoy are in poor taste. They like alliterative and robust speech. If left alone, they will come through this stage naturally and learn the art of discrimination. Children in stories do the things real children aren't allowed to do, and while the real ones don't resent this fact, they do get a second-hand thrill from it. Literature of this type is a "safety valve

against the pressure of adults; a relief from refinements."<sup>1</sup>

Many of these foolish characters never discover how ridiculous they are, and children go for this. Mr. Vinegar with a fortune dumped in his lap traded it away, as did Hans In Luck. But we aren't told that either regretted or admitted his mistake. The Little Tailor, who deluded even himself into thinking he was a superman, made good. This is a type of hero worship tale loved by boys especially. The Three Sillies (or the Twelve Sillies as some writers have it), learn how silly they are, but they waste no time in idle lamentation. Clever Else and her equally clever parents who mourn over the fate of her unborn son, delight all children. "Never count your chickens," they say when we finish this story. On the other hand, Clever Gretel who plays her employer off against his guest so that she herself may eat the good dinner, is certainly a crook in any child's estimation. Here is a greedy character living by her wits, and she is due for some bad end even though we don't take her that far. Some of the more serious minded children say she made herself sick and didn't try that trick again.

We have many stories called "The Simpleton." These concern the third son usually, who is mistreated by brothers and parents because he doesn't seem overly bright. But by keeping his eyes open and his mouth shut, being polite and considerate of the old or ugly, he receives a handsome reward while the bright boys rate rough treatment. In one story the simpleton asks the king for a beating as

<sup>1</sup> Josette Frank, *What Books For Children?* Doubleday Doran, 1937.



a reward because the king's two servants had made him promise them half of his pay before they would let him in. You can well imagine the youngster's howls of mirth at this point. "Nail Soup" tells the story of the clever tramp who tricked the penurious old woman into giving him a large store of fine food because he could make delicious soup with just water and a nail. She never realized she was being duped, and as she is such an unsympathetic old character, who never gave charity of any sort, we are all glad she is outsmarted. The tramp, though a ne'er-do-well, is such a happy-go-lucky fellow with a devil-may-care philosophy that one has to admire him somewhat even though one wouldn't care to be just like him.

For the most part, these noodles are kind-hearted, wise in their ways and the workings of their minds are easy to follow. Their word is their bond; they keep their promises. Maybe we should not psycho-analyze every character we meet. As children we accepted and enjoyed them and the children for many generations to come will do likewise. These noodles are funny, and according to Dr. Walter Barnes, "humor is one emotion which can and must be shared; it is of a social nature."

Let us take children where we find them, and let them develop their literary tastes normally. Adults tend to idealize childhood too much. Some childless middle-aged friends enjoyed watching a little girl neighbor who each day climbed to the top of an apple tree and swung in the breezes, eyes closed and a rapt expression on her face. They knew her thoughts were deep, deep thoughts—her's must be the soul of a poet. So one day the gentleman gently questioned her as to the nature of her dreams. "I am thinking of my little boy friendth," she lisped.

The same holds true with undue

moralizing. As a child, I read many times the story of Rosamund and the purple jar. I felt it too bad that her mother hadn't done as mine would—put her foot down and said "No." I was nearly grown before the full import of that story became apparent, but when I did get it, it was mine. A mother told her four-year-old daughter the story of the beautiful collie dog who was destroyed because he ran with a pack of sheep-killing dogs, even though he was guilty of no actual wrong. She paused impressively and asked, "Now, what does this story teach us?" "Not to kill sheeps," came the child's instant reply.

The Disney influence is felt in every type of fairy tale these days. Here we find utility sacrificed for beauty as in the case of the Ants and the Grasshopper. We are made to feel that there is a place in the scheme of things for the entertainers, the singers and dancers, as well as for the grubbers. We need both. The jester fills a necessary niche of his own.

In general, of what value are these stories to children? The broadening of the child's mental and emotional horizon looms large. Cultivation of imagination is no small item. How many unimaginative people do you know? Too many. Bad habits are seen as undesirable when they are ridiculed instead of being made much of. By identifying himself with the hero, the child has a means of self-expression. As most literature grows out of these folk tales, they are invaluable as a preparation for a literary appreciation later on.<sup>2</sup> The atmosphere of these stories is simple, helping to undo complexities of modern life. Surely a sense of humor is developed through them. They are a deep source of education as they give the child a chance to visit other lands and cultures and absorb the atmosphere found there.

<sup>2</sup> Anne T. Eaton, *Reading With Children*, Viking, 1940.



# Let Records Speak For The Newbery Books

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WHY IS THERE so much speculation about the inherent value of the Newbery books? Certainly it is not because of any absence of skilled workmanship which has gone into their production by authors, illustrators, editors and publishers, nor because of a lack of careful selection and wise judgment by the various committees who have chosen them; the speculation concerns rather the reception of the books by the children for whom they are intended.

Many opinions and observations have been offered to substantiate points of view held by teachers, librarians and laymen,<sup>1-6</sup> and since common agreement seems not to have been reached, there is submitted here evidence based on actual cumulative library records of thirty-eight elementary children who have been regular borrowers from the J. H. Ackerman Campus Elementary School Library of the Eastern Oregon College of Education from the time they enrolled in the first grade until they entered junior high school, which in our system, begins in the eighth grade.

Since these records have been kept daily from 1935 as a means of discovering children's reading interests and with no thought of making a study of the

Newbery books, as such, there are no artificial factors involved which might prejudice the findings. Moreover, the children are entirely unselected except for the fact that they are the only ones out of 314 whose attendance has been continuous.

At first thought, thirty-eight may not seem to be a sufficient number to be significant until it is realized that each of the records in the aggregate comprises seven years of each child's life as he passed successively from grades one to seven, or a total of 266 grade records. Furthermore, it was discovered by consulting the office records for standard test rankings and teachers' ratings of reading progress that the group was a good sampling of elementary school children, for they were classified as follows:

#### ABILITY ACCORDING TO STANDARD TESTS

- 1 near genius
- 3 very superior
- 14 superior
- 18 average
- 2 below average

#### TEACHER'S RATINGS OF READING ABILITY

- 3 outstanding
- 10 excellent
- 9 good
- 6 average
- 10 below average, with three of them poor.

To verify the fact that the group under consideration is a standard one which is representative of a much larger number, their reactions to the Newbery books have been compared with those of a previous study of 914 grade records of the entire school and have been found

<sup>1</sup> *Bookman* 74:308-16 "Ten Years of the Newbery Medal." S. L. Goldsmith.

<sup>2</sup> *Elementary English Review* 16:283 "Open Forum on the Newbery Medal."

<sup>3</sup> *Elementary English Review* 17:218-220 "Children's Opinions of Newbery Prize Books." Rose Zeligs.

<sup>4</sup> *Library Journal* 60:39-41 "The Popularity of Newbery Medal Books." Mary E. Townes.

<sup>5</sup> *Peabody Journal of Education* 7:139-46 "Some in Velvet Gowns." Marjorie Thomas.

<sup>6</sup> *Wilson Library Bulletin* 16:724-5 "The Newbery Medal; a Plea for Understanding."

similar. The advantage in this case lies in the possibility of fuller interpretative analysis of the data.

For instance, it was feasible with clerical help<sup>7</sup> to find out which of the twenty Newbery books each of the children read; at which grade levels each of them read or reread them; and what year each was read. Examination of the records showed that in practically every case each of the books was read by some of the children in every grade from the third through the seventh, which points out the fallacy of stipulating a grade level at which any particular book is to be read.

There is likewise a good case for arranging for early acquaintance with the books, for more often than not, if the child read one of the books in the third grade he was apt to reread it in the fourth, fifth, and sixth grades. The majority were read before the sixth, and especially before the seventh grade, while none was read before the third. A few tendencies were noted, viz., that most of the children read *Voyages of Dr. Dolittle* in the fourth and fifth grades, that a comparatively large number read *Caddie Woodlawn* in the fourth, and that *Smoky* seemed to be popular in every grade from the fourth through the seventh. In agreement with studies made by Rose Zeligs<sup>8</sup> and Mary E. Townes,<sup>9</sup> *Voyages of Dr. Dolittle* and *Smoky* are ranked by both boys and girls as general favorites. This present group would add *Caddie Woodlawn* and *Roller Skates* to the list. The ranking in popularity is compared with the study made by Rose Zeligs since in both cases the basis used was the number of times the books were read. The lists are arranged in order of popularity with the least popular books omitted:

ROSE ZELIGS' RETURNS BASED ON 150  
6TH GRADERS FROM SEPT.-MAR. 1939

Voyages of Dr. Dolittle  
Smoky and Young Fu  
Caddie Woodlawn  
Roller Skates and Invincible Louisa  
White Stag  
Gay-Neck and Story of Mankind  
Dark Frigate, Shen of Sea, Trumpeter of  
Krakow  
Dobry

THIS STUDY BASED ON 266 GRADE RECORDS  
FROM 1ST TO 7TH GRADES FROM 1935-1942

Voyages of Dr. Dolittle  
Smoky  
Caddie Woodlawn  
Roller Skates  
Gay-Neck  
Dark Frigate  
White Stag, Dobry, Invincible Louisa  
Shen of the Sea  
Hitty, Tales from Silver Lands  
Trumpeter of Krakow, Waterless Mountain

These findings apparently give credence to Rose Zeligs' assumption that a sampling of sixth grade pupils can be used as a basis for predicting popularity of the books in question. However, it does not preclude evidence that some of the books might be much more fully enjoyed and appreciated at some other grade level.

As a follow-up of the library records, a questionnaire was prepared. All but six of the group supplied the information requested which included the number of books read in and out of school, those that were especially well liked, and the extent to which they were read voluntarily. The results were tabulated and evaluated in a table which is too detailed to include here. In summary it may be said that it was found that the children who read Newbery books at school read others at home and at the public library, for, with but one exception, all had read more than their school records showed. However the greater number of books read did not, in the main, change the conclusions regarding the ones which were the best and least liked. It did give a better idea of

<sup>7</sup> A grant by the Oregon State System of Higher Education provided for clerical help by Margaret Stewart and Judith Rinell, of La Grande.

<sup>8</sup> *Op. cit.*

<sup>9</sup> *Op. cit.*

the way in which the newer books on the list are being received and indicated that *Daniel Boone*, *Thimble Summer*, and *Call It Courage* may come into favor as time goes on. In a number of cases teachers had read or introduced Newbery books to their classes, but those books were not necessarily the ones the children especially liked.

Due to the impression which is prevalent that only the superior readers are attracted to the Newbery books, the table is included (Table I) which shows the case for each child in the group by comparing intelligence quotients, teachers' ratings of reading ability, and the number of Newbery books read both in and out of school. All read some of the books, and two read all of them. Combined records show that:

- 18 read ten or more of the twenty books
- 10 read six or more
- 10 read five or less
- 25 reread favorites

At the extremes, the outstanding readers appear to have read the most, and the poorest readers the least, but some superior readers read few while some average readers read many. In answer to the question regarding the books which the children especially liked, they not only checked the books but added enthusiastic comments to strengthen their acclaim for them. For example, one girl said, "I especially liked *Roller Skates* and *Caddie Woodlawn*. I think anyone could read them many times and still not be tired of them." One of the girls who had read all twenty of the books, said of *Voyages of Dr. Dolittle* that it was "convulsingly funny." Books mentioned by children as especially pleasing were:

Caddie Woodlawn	16
Voyages of Dr. Dolittle	15
Smoky, White Stag	14
Roller Skates, Daniel Boone,	
Thimble Summer	12
Gay-Neck, Call It Courage	9

Hitty	7
Dark Frigate	6
Cat Who Went To Heaven	5
Young Fu, Shen of the Sea	4
Dobry, Trumpeter of Krakow,	
Invincible Louisa	3

Perhaps it should have been stated at the outset that the children's library at the school is a standard one of approximately 6,000 volumes, and that the children also have access to an excellent public library of approximately 8,000 volumes. The children do like to read and have had books available at all times. Since the school was established in 1929, the library is modern and has little waste material. The environment in which the recreational reading program has grown has been described in three articles by Mildred M. Hawksworth (Lowell) which appeared in the *Oregon Education Journal* of March, April, and May of 1934.

We conclude that when boys and girls have access to them they do like the Newbery books, and our records show that the Newbery books find favor along with *Tom Sawyer*, *Little Women*, *Treasure Island*, *Heidi*, *Pinocchio*, *Robin Hood* and *Arabian Nights*.

TABLE I  
COMPARISON OF I. Q., READING ABILITY AND  
NUMBER OF BOOKS READ

Pupil	I. Q.	Teacher's Ratings In Reading	Number		No. Re- read
			Newbery Books Read	All Reading	
1.	114	Superior	4	5	2
2.	117	Good	5	8	2
3.	95	Good	5	13	2
4.	120	Outstanding	10	—*	2
5.	112	Good	7	5	3
6.	117	Below Average	7	8	3
7.	133	Excellent	5	17	5
8.	127	Very Good	11	12	3
9.	104	Poor to Fair	0	6	0
10.	99	Fair to Good	9	11	2
11.	132	Excellent	7	13	5
12.	100	Poor	1	4	1
13.	90	Poor to Good	4	10	3
14.	110	Poor to Fair	3	10	2
15.	115	Very Commendable	8	17	2
16.	125	Excellent	2	6	1
17.	127	Good	7	8	2
18.	127	Good	4	—	1

\* Questionnaire not filled out.

19.	134	Outstanding	7	20	6
20.	141	Outstanding	7	20	7
21.	117	Average	5	9	0
22.	128	Very Good	8	11	3
23.	88	Satisfactory	3	13	0
24.	107	Below Average	3	12	1
25.	115	Satisfactory	3	6	1
26.	90	Satisfactory	5	12	6
27.	127	Superior	7	—	0
28.	108	Fair	3	—	1
29.	113	Fair to Good	3	4	0
30.	117	Average to Good	6	10	0
31.	120	Excellent	4	6	0
32.	104	Good	4	7	0
33.	122	Good	7	—	0
34.	87	Poor	2	—	1
35.	134	Good	8	11	4
36.	111	Very Satisfactory	2	3	0
37.	102	Average	4	8	1
38.	113	Good	7	11	5

An idea of the relative popularity of Newbery books and other books is fur-

nished by a study made by Miss Elizabeth Ham Harris,<sup>10</sup> of the Eastern Oregon College of Education. Miss Harris' study is based on 278 grade records for the fourth, fifth, and sixth grades, during the years 1935-1939. The proportions are as follows:

	4th	5th	6th	Total
Boys	57	50	41	148
Girls	53	41	36	130
Total	110	91	77	278

Included in this number are the 38 pupils whose reading of the Newbery books is the subject of this paper.

Table II is from Miss Harris' study, and is used with her permission.

<sup>10</sup> Unpublished Master's thesis, Stanford University.

TABLE II  
BOOKS WERE CHECKED BY CHILDREN OF GRADES FOUR, FIVE, SIX

FOURTH GRADE					
GIRLS			BOYS		
Author	Book	Times Withdrawn	Author	Book	Times Withdrawn
1. Brink	<i>Caddie Woodlawn*</i>	22	1. Stevenson	Treasure Island	17
2. Lofting	<i>Voyages of Dr. Dolittle</i>	20	2. Pyle	Some Merry Adventures of Robin Hood	16
3. Phillips	Little Rag Doll	19	3. James	<i>Smoky, the Cow Horse</i>	16
4. Alcott	Little Women	18	4. Bigham	Sonny Elephant	15
5. Bigham	Sonny Elephant	17	5. Cody	Adventures of Buffalo Bill	13
6. Aldis	Jane's Father	15	6. James	Young Cowboy	13
7. Alcott	An Old-Fashioned Girl	11	7. Weymouth	What Plane is That?	12
8. Morris	Susan and Arabella, Pioneers	11	8. Cox	The Brownies	11
9. Meigs	<i>Invincible Louisa</i>	10	9. Cox	Another Brownie Book	11
10. Milne	Winnie the Pooh	10	10. Gates	Nick and Dick	10
11. Saunders	Beautiful Joe	10	11. Buck	On Jungle Trails	10
12. Allee	Jane's Island	9	12. James	In the Saddle with Uncle Bill	10
13. Kaigh-Eustace	Jungle Babies	9	13. Meigs	Wonderful Locomotive	10
14. Lenski	Arabella and her Aunts	9	14. Saunders	Beautiful Joe	9
15. Newell	Little Old Lady Who Used Her Head	9	15. Sewell	Black Beauty	9
16. Parrish	Floating Island	9	16. Schultz	Lone Bulls Mistake	9
17. Carroll	Alice's Adventures in Wonderland	8	17. Morrow	Ship's Monkey	9
18. Gruelle	Raggedy Ann Stories	8	18. London	Call of the Wild	9
19. Finger	<i>Tales from Silver Lands</i>	8	19. Lofting	<i>Voyages of Dr. Dolittle</i>	9
20. Enright	Kinter	8	20. Gifford	Red Feather' Adventures	9

\* Newbery books are in italics.

FIFTH GRADE					
GIRLS			BOYS		
Author	Book	Times Withdrawn	Author	Book	Times Withdrawn
1. Parrish	Floating Island	15	1. James	<i>Smoky, the Cow Horse</i>	17
2. Alcott	Little Women	14	2. Lofting	<i>Voyages of Dr. Dolittle</i>	17
3. Haskell	Katrina	13	3. Terhune	Lad, a Dog	16
4. Spyri	Heidi	12	4. Cody	Adventures of Buffalo Bill	13
5. Alcott	An Old-Fashioned Girl	11	5. Clemens	Tom Sawyer	12
6. Lofting	<i>The Voyage of Dr. Dolittle</i>	11	6. Carter	Shaggy	12
7. Allee	Jane's Island	10	7. Buck	On Jungle Trails	11
8. Hale	Peterkin Papers	10	8. Brink	Best Short Stories for Boys and Girls	10
9. Mukerji	<i>Gay-Neck</i>	10	9. Stevenson	Treasure Island	10



## LET RECORDS SPEAK FOR THE NEWBERY BOOKS

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10. Sawyer	<i>Roller Skates</i>	10	10 Stevenson	<i>Kidnapped</i>	9
11. Shannon	<i>Dobry</i>	10	11. Adams	<i>Log of a Cowboy</i>	9
12. Stevenson	<i>Treasure Island</i>	9	12. Doone	<i>Nuvat, the Brave</i>	9
13. Plowhead	<i>Lucretia Ann on the Oregon Trail</i>	9	13. Hader	<i>Spunky</i>	9
14. Alcott	<i>Beppo and Lucia</i>	9	14. London	<i>Call of the Wild</i>	9
15. Morris	<i>Susan and Arabella</i>	9	15. Pyle	<i>Some Merry Adventures of Robin Hood</i>	9
16. Hawkes	<i>Pep</i>	9	16. Seredy	<i>White Stag</i>	9
17. Doone	<i>Nuvat the Brave</i>	9	17. Baldwin	<i>Story of Roland</i>	8
18. Brister	<i>The Magic Leaves and Other Tales</i>	9	18. Hawkes	<i>Pep</i>	8
19. Brink	<i>Caddie Woodlawn</i>	9	19. Lorenzini	<i>Pinocchio</i>	8
20. Field	<i>Hitty, her First Hundred Years</i>	8	20. Morrow	<i>On to Oregon</i>	8

Also checked out 8 times: Snedeker—*Beckoning Road*;  
Schiff—*Traveling Gallery*; Seton—*Biography of a Grizzly*.

## SIXTH GRADE

GIRLS			BOYS		
Author	Book	Times Withdrawn	Author	Book	Times Withdrawn
1. Brink	<i>Best Short Stories for Boys and Girls</i>	18	1. James	<i>Six Feet Six</i>	9
2. Brink	<i>Caddie Woodlawn</i>	17	2. Terhune	<i>Lad, a Dog</i>	9
3. Alcott	<i>Little Women</i>	15	3. Wyss	<i>Swiss Family Robinson</i>	8
4. Snedeker	<i>Beckoning Road</i>	14	4. Verne	<i>Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea</i>	7
5. Snedeker	<i>Downright Dency</i>	12	5. Kaler	<i>Toby Tyler</i>	7
6. Morrow	<i>On to Oregon</i>	10	6. Hawkes	<i>Shaggycoat</i>	7
7. Mukerji	<i>Gay-Neck</i>	10	7. Grey	<i>Rolling Wheels</i>	7
8. Malot	<i>Nobody's Boy</i>	9	8. Cooper	<i>Last of the Mohicans</i>	6
9. Hale	<i>Peterkin Papers</i>	9	9. Snedeker	<i>Downright Dency</i>	6
10. Allee	<i>Jane's Island</i>	9	10. Sabin	<i>Old Jim Bridger on the Moccasin Trail</i>	6
11. Alcott	<i>Old-Fashioned Girl</i>	9	11. Altsheler	<i>Young Trailers</i>	5
12. Bland	<i>Wonderful Garden</i>	7	12. Clemens	<i>Tom Sawyer</i>	5
13. Gray	<i>Jane Hope</i>	7	13. Clemens	<i>Huckleberry Finn</i>	5
14. Kaler	<i>Toby Tyler</i>	7	14. Cody	<i>Adventures of Buffalo Bill</i>	5
15. Meader	<i>Who Rides in the Dark</i>	7	15. Gray	<i>Dawgs</i>	5
16. Meigs	<i>Invincible Louisa</i>	7	16. Johnson	<i>Lion</i>	5
17. Morris	<i>Susan and Arabella</i>	7	17. Moon	<i>Tah kee, the Boy from Nowhere</i>	5
18. Seredy	<i>White Stag</i>	7	18. Seton	<i>Biography of a Grizzly</i>	5
19. Tracy	<i>Wings of the Morning</i>	7	19. Swan	<i>Frontier Days</i>	5
20. Plowhead	<i>Lucretia Ann on the Oregon Trail</i>	6	20. Tousey	<i>Cowboy Tommy's Roundup</i>	5

Also checked out 6 times: Crichton—*Peep-in-the-World*;  
Dix—*Merry Lips*; Enright—*Kinta*; Lofting—*Voyages of Dr. Dolittle*; Looker—*The White House Gang*.

## THE NEWBERY AND CALDECOTT AWARDS

At the meeting of the American Library Association in June, it was announced that the John Newbery Medal for the most distinguished contribution to children's literature had been awarded, this year, to Walter D. Edmonds for his book, *The Matchlock Gun* (Dodd, Mead, \$2.00).

Robert McCloskey received the Caldecott Medal for the most distinguished picture book for children, for *Make Way for Ducklings*, of which he is both author and illustrator. This volume is published by Viking (\$2.00).



# Reviewing Children's Books

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**M**Y COLLEGE classes in Children's Literature enter the course with very little experience in reviewing books, particularly in reviewing books for children. The following suggestions sometimes prove helpful to them in reviewing books of fiction.

A report should be a sharing of one's reading experience,—not merely proof that one has read the book, but that he has read it intelligently, and with a critical mind. Because books of fiction differ greatly in pattern, purpose, and subject, there can be no set pattern for a review. The suggestions below will help only if they are not followed in catalog fashion nor all used for every book.

1. A summary, by no means necessary in a review, should, if given at all, be concise and brief. The incidents to be included should be chosen for their significance and importance to the plot as a whole. The dénouement is usually omitted. The gist of the narrative can be given without resorting to a narrative summary. Note the pattern of Miss Anne T. Eaton's review of *The Well of the Star*, that part which suggests what the story is about:

How David hoping his heart might be pure enough for the vision, sought the well, what he saw there and how he suddenly found himself riding with three splendid, grave-faced kings to the little house above the stable, how he laid down his shepherd's pipe, his dearest treasure, before the child in the manger with the other rich gifts, and how David himself received a gift that night, makes an appealing story, full of the spirit of Christmas.<sup>1</sup>

A somewhat - different manner of

<sup>1</sup> Anne T. Eaton, *New York Times Book Review*, Dec. 14, 1941, p. 10.

summing up suggests the content of *The Forgotten Daughter*:

The daughter of a well-born woman of Lesbos and a Roman soldier spends her childhood and girlhood as a slave on the country estate of her father's family. In the presence or harsh treatment and scanty comfort, her Greek sensitiveness to beauty is satisfied by the incomparable poetry of her mother's people, and by the beauty of the Italian countryside. A love story, the stirring events in Rome at the time of the Gracchi, an attempt to escape from slavery, and the solution of the mystery of Chloe's abandonment by her father furnish the action.<sup>2</sup>

2. Mention of the setting, time and place, and the scope of the story should be made. The paragraph quoted above supplies this information by the phrase, "in Rome at the time of the Gracchi," and the scope of the story is probably "her childhood and girlhood as a slave." However, if these facts are not implicit in the summary, they may be given explicitly, as in the opening paragraph of Ellen Lewis Buell's review of Marguerite de Angeli's *Elin's Amerika*:

The America which Elin came to know and to love between two Springs was the rich and beautiful country on the banks of the Delaware where Governor Printz established in the sixteen-forties the colony of New Sweden.<sup>3</sup>

Notice that the reviewers do not catalog the facts by saying "The setting is . . .," "The time is . . .," "The story covers so many years. . ."

3. The reviewer should discover to the reader the purpose of the book, or anything accomplished other than the narrative itself. No effort should be made to force a moral or utilitarian purpose upon

<sup>2</sup> D. B., *The Elementary English Review*, Jan. 1934, p. 32.

<sup>3</sup> Ellen Lewis Buell, *New York Times Book Review*, Dec. 7, 1941, p. 10.

an *Alice in Wonderland* or a *Ferdinand*. Humor and fantasy may be ends and aims in themselves. The reviewer of *The Forgotten Daughter* suggests what one may look for:

The parallels between the Roman Republic and the United States today are, of course, many and striking. Mrs. Snedeker uses them to vivify the period of which she writes. She points out, for example, that the problem of the dispossession of the small farmers which cost Tiberius Gracchus his life has its counterpart in present-day America. In thus explaining ancient customs in terms of today, however, Mrs. Snedeker allows for differences in viewpoint.<sup>4</sup>

4. A comment on the characters may be desired by the reader of a review. Questions that may be asked are: Are there many characters or few? Are they more or less important than the theme or the story itself?

The two paragraphs below, from different reviews, illustrate comments that may be made on characters in a story:

The pirate was an ugly fellow, eyebrows and teeth missing, one eye gone, and scarred from small-pox, but he was staunch and loyal to the children. He had become a pirate largely by accident, and at heart was generous and good, with a strict code of behavior which he saw that the children observed.<sup>5</sup>

There was Sylvie, correct and capable, and here was Joe, who, in spite of his awkwardness, stole the show at the dreaded dance recital with his sailor's hornpipe. And there was six-year-old Rufus, who jaunted off on his first day of school to New Haven in a freight train out of devotion to an unsocial classmate. But mostly we see the world through the wide perceptive eyes of Jane, who often liked to have a new look at it from between her legs, upside down. It is Jane who reveals most surely the unpredictable moods and deeply felt, seldom-spoken emotions of childhood.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>4</sup> D. B. lo. cit.

<sup>5</sup> Miriam Blanton Huber, *Pedro's Pirate*, by Etta Baldwin. *Elementary English Review*, Nov. 1941.

<sup>6</sup> Ellen Lewis Buell, *The Moffats*, by Eleanor Estes, *New York Times Book Review*, Dec. 7, 1941, p. 10.

5. An explanation of the title in terms of the story may be given explicitly in the review or suggested, as in the paragraph on *Elin's Amerika*, quoted above.

6. A reference to the author and his or her background or experience may be expected in a critical review. In reviewing *In My Mother's House*, Miriam Blanton Huber says:

The author, Ann Nolan Clark, is a native of New Mexico. She has spent the last ten years in the Indian service working with children. There she found a need for books that tell of things as the Indians see them. To produce each book, she has lived for several years at a time with different Indian tribes catching the tempo of their thinking and speech.<sup>7</sup>

7. A statement of the reviewer's critical judgment of the book is practically a "must" in this list of suggestions. His emotional reaction may be included, and is often a guide to the reader of the review, but the emotional reaction must not take the place of, or be confused with the more coldly critical analysis. In analyzing critically, the reviewer may find it convenient to compare one book with another by the same author or with another by a different author. He may mention the age level for which the book is suitable and the type of reader who will be interested. He should not hesitate to make adverse criticisms if he feels that the characters do not come to life, if the plot is not sound, or if the book fails in any respect. Generally speaking, either adverse or favorable criticism should be supported by specific details.

In giving his emotional reaction, the reviewer should avoid lame conclusions such as, "I like this book very much." He should rather let the reader feel that he has enjoyed the book than tell him so.

Passages from reviews of Miss Lois Lenski's *Bound Girl of Cobble Hill* and of Margaret Loring Thomas's *Carlos, Our*

<sup>7</sup> Miriam Blanton Huber, *Elementary English Review*, Nov. 1941.

*Mexican Neighbor* will suggest critical approaches.

In her skillful and interested search for the details of early New England life, Lois Lenski . . . has taken infinite pains . . . It is in her settings and backgrounds that Miss Lenski excels, rather than in her characterization. . . Mindwell Gibbs is Miss Lenski's most successfully realized heroine but even she is not entirely convincing, and the other characters of the story never come to life<sup>8</sup>

Always through the story sounds the refrain of the old man's love for his land and the desire of the peasants for land of their own. This is a pretty complicated problem to set before 9- and 10-year-old readers . . . yet the issue as presented here does give the sense of the struggle going on between two ways of life.<sup>9</sup>

8. Finally there might be suggestion of other details. That, however, should not minimize the importance of any other item or part of a book review. If there is anything significant about the book which is not included in the suggestions, the reviewer should by all means mention it. For example, nothing has been said about that intangible subject, style. It may be described as racy or poetic or heavy or whatever it may be, but if the reviewer was aware of the style, that awareness is apt to be evident, implicitly, if not otherwise, in his review.

Above all, a reviewer should not feel that every one of the seven or eight points given above must be mentioned and in the order given. The arrangement should be determined by the book and the reader. In 1936 two critics enthusiastically reviewed *Fierce-Face* by Mukerji. What they said, though substantially the same in meaning, was said in very different

<sup>8</sup> Anne T. Eaton. *New York Times Book Review*, Dec. 4, 1938.

<sup>9</sup> Ellen Lewis Buell. *New York Times Book Review*, Oct. 9, 1938.

language, and their organizations were unlike. Roughly, the reviews might be outlined as follows:

## 1

Comment on the author and his evident sincerity.

The book compared with Kipling's *Jungle Book*.

Analysis of the author's method and purpose.

Summary of the story.

Comment on illustrations.

Age level of readers.

## 2

Comment on illustrations.

Age level of readers.

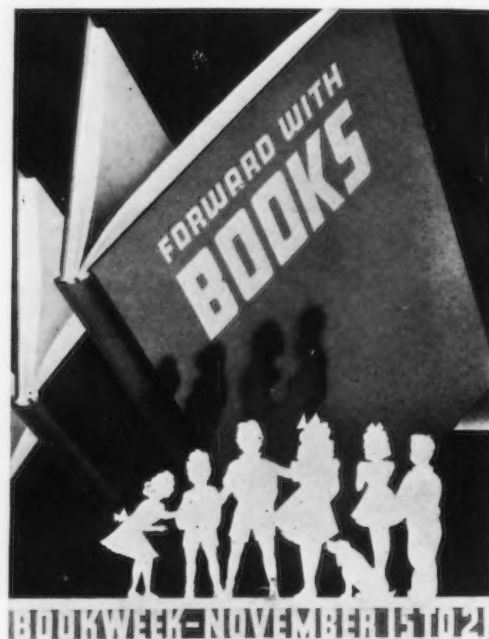
Comment on author's sincerity.

Comparison with the *Jungle Book*.

Summary.

Analysis of method and purpose.

Perhaps all this merely adds up to saying, "Just talk about your book. Tell me why you liked the book or why you dislike it."



# What About the Child Who Doesn't Like to Read?

NORMAN LEWIS

Teacher, Public School for Adults,  
Mount Vernon, N. Y.

NOT ENOUGH teachers seem to realize that one of the primary causes for failure, not only in English but in all other academic subjects, is inability to read in one phase or another. The very first question a teacher should ask herself when she is confronted with the problem of a boy or girl who does not care for books is; "Can the child read?" An amazing number of students come through the grades every year without ever having learned to absorb a printed page. From the standpoint of the present day educational system such children are as handicapped as if they were blind.

Remedial work in reading is too well known today to need discussion at this point. Let us deal solely with two types of malefactors: the lazy type, who can read but won't; and the rascal whose reading is copious (often excessive!) but whose taste has not risen above the level of the pulp magazine.

The teacher who wishes to be successful in introducing her backward reader, or her reader with the warped or undeveloped taste, to the fascination of good literature, must learn to be a skilful interviewer. She must be capable of establishing a certain rapport between herself and the student. Not until she does that will the child admit that his chief literary relaxation is "Superman" and "Dick Tracy"; or that, to his mind, no author, living or dead, can possibly compare to G. A. Henty, Ralph Barbour, or Burt L. Standish. This is, of course,

not the teacher's cue to make a display of righteous astonishment. On the contrary, she must agree heartily and with unsuspicionable sincerity. Hence, she herself will have to be a pretty avid reader of Henty and Barbour and Superman. She herself will have to spend some afternoon hours, as many of her students do, listening to such radio jewels as the Aldrich Family, Betty and Bob, Myrt and Marge, *et cetera and nauseam*. She will occasionally have to purchase copies of *True Stories*, *Romantic Tales*, *Mystery Detective Magazine*, *Argosy*, and a number of other pulp magazines. (Come to think of it, a little less reliance on *Harper's* and *The Atlantic* might cause a pleasant change in many of us pedagogues.) Too, she will have to attend the class Z motion pictures at least as often as her students do. (After a little experience, one can sit through these quite stoically.) For in no business as much as in the teaching of English must a salesman (which is what a teacher solely is when it comes to literature) know the worth and weakness of her competitor's goods. And, as in business, a teacher will get few orders by the simple expedient of a blanket "knock," sight unseen, of all her competitor's wares. Any fifteen-dollar-a-week salesman knows he must appear to see some merits in the other fellow's line.

This is an important point. Children, like older human beings, can live now without literature, for in modern life there are too many substitutes which give the



same relaxation, the same vicarious living, the same escape, as good books. It is up to the teacher to prove (*prove*, not merely state) that good literature can fulfill these functions in a superlatively better way.

The teacher who has thoroughly familiarized herself with the student's background and interests, who has gained his trust and confidence, has won half the battle. For a triumphant completion of her work, she must bring to her next task a wide knowledge of all the good books ever written for boys and girls. She must consider the school library a well-stocked general store, and she must know that stock well. For each type of reader, for each kind of deficiency, she must be able to bring to mind the specific book that will attract, that will start the invalid on his road to recovery. For example:

For the student who reads only the kind of continued adventure stories found in most of the comics, prescribe *Adventure Stories* by Conan Doyle, the breezier works of Jack London, John Masefield, Rudyard Kipling, Altsheler, Scoville, Sabatini, and S. S. Smith. These writers will serve as a bridge between an addiction to Nick Carter and the funnies, and the better books; they will serve to inspire an interest in fiction of a higher type.

For the child who is interested in natural science, who knows all about animals, has a houseful of pets and fish, and, therefore, having found his escape, does not need literature, suggest London's *Call of the Wild* and *White Fang*; books by Stevenson, W. H. Hudson, Ernest Thompson Seton, Albert Payson Terhune, and Felix Salten.

For the Frank Merriwell fan there are books by Jules Verne, Nordhoff and Hall, Mark Twain, John Buchan.

For the girl who has been wallowing in the goo of confession magazines—books by Willa Cather, May Sinclair and *Maria Chapdelaine* by Hemon.

The successful teacher of literature, must, then, (1) know adolescents thoroughly; (2) know literature thoroughly; (3) know modern day substitutes for literature; (4) know how to interview; (5) be skilled in the use of testing devices (to detect below average ability or total inability to read); (6) be able to remedy poor reading habits; (7) be able to make a book sound so attractive that an adolescent will be unable to sit still until he gets his hands on it; and (8) be a skilful salesman. She knows her wares have stood the test of time; without being didactic, she must be able to convince her pupils of the superiority of good literature over shoddy substitutes.

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# Reviews and Abstracts

SARITA DAVIS

Librarian, University Elementary School  
University of Michigan  
Ann Arbor

**One Act Trips Abroad**, by Jane Tobitt and Alice White. Dutton, 1941. \$1.50

These plays take their audiences to Bohemia ("The Devil and the Blacksmith") to Scotland ("Bonnie Prince Charlie") to the Assyria of 700 B. C. ("Tobit and Raphael") on an international tour to hear *Bell* which ends in England ("Dick Whittington"). Suggestions for costuming and staging accompany each play. As in *Dramatized Ballads*, musical scores are included. Club leaders, directors of dramatic groups and those planning radio programs will welcome this collection as enthusiastically as its predecessors.

**World Series**, by John Tunis. Illus. by Jay Hyde Barnum. Harcourt, Brace, 1941. \$2.00

The publication of this book was well timed for the Dodger fans who were seeing their team win the pennant, but the interest of older elementary school boys in following the career of Roy Tucker, the kid from Tompkinsville, will still be keen no matter which teams are at the top of the baseball leagues. While the time limit of the title is strictly kept, many incidents crowd into the story in the few days of the play-off. The hard work and team play necessary to win games is well described and the marks of good sportsmanship emphasized. All readers of J. R. Tunis may not agree with the ten-year-old who exclaimed of this, "It's the best of them all," but they will all enjoy it as a celebration of the biggest event on this country's sports calendar.

**Thomas Jones and His Nine Lives**, by Lawrence Edward Watkin. Illus. by Janice Holland. Harcourt, Brace, 1941. \$1.50

Another cat with a personality has been captured in this book. It is a fine adventure story for younger boys and girls who will share Sister's concern over the reckless way in which Thomas Jones wastes eight of his nine lives. They will admire his courage when he risks his ninth to bring help to her when she needs it badly. The author of *On Borrowed Time* and *Geese in the Forum* would be expected to put in a few humorous touches for

the gown-up reading the book with his children and they are there, but they do not slow up the story for those to whom it is particularly addressed.

Janice Holland's illustrations point up the incidents of the narrative and present pictorially the Tom and Sister which are created in the story.

**Find The Animals**, by Dorothy N. King. Pictures by Joseph Sica. Harcourt, Brace, 1941. \$1.50

A toy book with a surprise ending. The animals of the zoo escape from their cages one night and are found hiding in an envelope inside the back cover. Little children will learn to identify the animals and will be well prepared for a trip to the zoo. Older ones will enjoy making up games with this as a stimulus.

The design of the book is ingenious and its illustrations colorful.

**Betsy and Billy**, written and illustrated by Carolyn Hayword. Harcourt, Brace, 1941. \$2.00

The young reader of *B is for Betsy* will welcome this further chronicle of the young heroine and her friends in the second grade at school. Miss Gray, the favorite teacher, has been promoted too, and a pleasant year unfolds with its festivals at Halloween, Christmas, Valentine's Day and a bazaar as a climax.

This is a good school story and will appeal especially to little girls just beginning school themselves.

**The Moffats**, by Eleanor Estes. Illus. by Harcourt, Brace, 1941. \$2.00

Here is an opportunity to make some new friends, for the Moffats are as alive as any people existing in the flesh. The family incidents are seen mainly through the eyes of the imaginative and observant Janey who stands on her head to look about her when she tires of her regular viewpoint. However each of her brothers has his own adventure. Rufus, the youngest is pulled to New Haven in a box car while he is trying to persuade a fellow

first grader to return to his room on their first day at school. The engineer of the fast train which never before had stopped in Cranberry takes them back home, and the truant resolves to go to school faithfully in order to become an engineer himself.

The awkward Joey, joined by a neighbor's dog in his sailor's hornpipe, becomes the hit of the dancing class show.

Their Halloween prank with Madame, their mother's dressmaker's model as a ghost should be indexed for reading at October story hours. The whole book is excellent for reading aloud at home as it appeals both to younger and older children and their parents. A "must" book for libraries.

**Coat For A Soldier**, by Florence M. Updegraff, illustrated by Eva A. Watson. Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1941. \$2.00

This first book of Miss Updegraff's is a truly fine story for these times when reminders are needed that others in this country have faced difficulties with courage and resource.

Thirteen-year-old Deborah of 1774, who prefers outdoor work with her father and brothers to the womanly tasks of housekeeping, will interest girls of the early 'teen years. The fleece which she shears from her own lamb reconciles her to learning all the steps of making a cloak for herself. While becoming skilled at spinning and weaving, she also learns lessons in generosity and patriotism, and the cloak planned for herself becomes one of three coats for soldiers in Washington's army sent from her household. Adventures were plentiful in those challenging times, Debby and her brother meet Paul Revere on his way to New York in an attempt to unite the colonies. The uncle from Boston is a Son of Liberty. History books will be more meaningful to one who has read this novel, because of its faithful accurate details concerning the lives of New Englanders at the beginning of the Revolutionary War.

**Paul Bunyan**, by Esther Shepard, illustrated by Rockwell Kent. Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1941. \$2.50

Here are Esther Shepard's well loved tales of Paul Bunyan, first published in 1924, in a second edition, but this time embellished with the drawings of Rockwell Kent. Clever initials begin each chapter and predict pictorially which tale is to be told. The illustrations have an abstract design that will appeal to readers who are repelled by the vivid colors in Virginia Turney's *Paul Bunyan*, also published

this year. In these designs the great size of Paul is well depicted, his strength and heroic action are well suggested. The humor of the tales also is reflected in some of the illustrations. This is a fine edition and belongs in public and school libraries for older boys and girls to reread.

**Panchita, A Little Girl of Guatemala**, by Delia Goetz, illustrated by Charlotte Anna Chase. Harcourt, Brace, 1941. \$2.00

Panchita is a very lovable girl from Guatemala. Young readers will understand her reluctance to give up play in order to learn the family trade—pottery making. Equally they will share her desire to learn to make a doll's tea set in order to earn money to buy the beautiful American doll with yellow curls and a pink dress in the shop window in town. When at last the tea set is finished and on sale at the market, she sees the doll again in the arms of a visiting American girl just her age. Her disappointment turns to joy when the American prefers her tea set to the doll and is forced to exchange in order to meet the baggage limitation set by the airliner.

The author tells us much about the life of country people of Guatemala—the planting of corn, the fiestas, the markets, the harvest, and the bus rides—but these details are woven unobtrusively in the background in such a way that the book escapes being another geographical story of Latin America.

The illustrations in sepia, black and white suggest the colors of the pottery which Panchita and her family fashion so expertly.

A good book for girls in the middle grades.

**Blueberry Mountain**, by Stephen Meader. Illustrated by Edward Shenton. Harcourt, Brace, 1941. \$2.00

The adventure-loving ten-year-olds and their older brothers who demand stories about twentieth century boys like themselves will follow the fortunes of Buck Evans with undivided attention. He is a poor boy with an invalid father and an ambitious mother trying to make a farm in the Poconos produce a living for the three, with her son's help. One source of income is the marketing of blueberries growing wild on the hills. Buck and his friend and partner, Joe Sullivan, have to compete against a gang of boys wishing to make a little money the easiest way possible—even stealing berries if they can.

Dan becomes interested in cultivating the bushes in order to produce a finer, more profitable crop, and with the advice of an experienced blueberry grower, manages to develop a remarkable patch, while continuing his studies in high school. The recovery of stolen money, football games, the rescue from the school bus stuck in a snow bank in a blizzard, and the final defeat of their unscrupulous rivals make for exciting reading. Here is another good Meader book to take its place beside *King of the Hills* and *T-Model Tommy*.

**Stars To Steer By**, by Louis Untermeyer, with pictures by Dorothy Bayley. Harcourt, Brace, 1941. \$2.50

"Oh, poetry" said Martin, "I can't read it."

"Maybe that's because you've never read the poems that were written for you. Now, for instance—"

The book *Stars to Steer By* is the continuation of this conversation of Louis Untermeyer with his sons and their friends. His informal introductions precede the poems which are grouped under interesting titles, as "Roads for Wanderers," "The Merry Heart," and "The Cry of Humanity." These guide the reader to poems on subjects which appeal to him and in moods in which he finds himself, an arrangement which will be especially appreciated by older boys and girls who have grown up on Mr. Untermeyer's *Rainbow in the Sky*.

Of the 150 poems included some are old, for example selections from the King James

Bible, Tennyson, Browning, Longfellow; and some are new and by people not often found in anthologies. Roland Young's "Zebra" is quoted, dialect poems by T. A. Daly and William Henry Drummond, and limericks and nonsense rhymes by the editor and his friends follow those of Edward Lear. The sole test that each met was its sincere appeal to young people. The anthologist expects his readers to understand the thought of the poets in order to share their feeling, in addition to liking the sound of the lines. The meanings of words likely to be unfamiliar are set in smaller type at the bottom of the page where they may be avoided by the knowing. One valuable section is "With Many Voices," where the directions are given for reading poems by groups of people. A stimulus to composing rhymes for fun is the series, "Important People."

The work of Dorothy Bayley is a visible argument in favor of colorful illustration to enhance the meaning of poetry. Brilliant end papers in four colors show a youth on a dashing gray horse followed by a dancing procession. Four colored plates within the book bring out adventure, humor, and action. The many black and white sketches are in varying moods to suit the verses.

Here is a collection of verse to form our taste and to serve truly as a star to steer by in a continuing search for the poetry written especially for us. For late elementary and junior high school years and up.

### THE "NOODLE" STORY

(Continued from page 200)

Many of these qualities are common to all folk tales, but they apply especially to the noodle story. And this is a piece of great good luck for the "naturals."

#### READINGS

Asquith, Lady Cynthia, ed. *The Flying Carpet*. Scribner, 1925.

Barnes, Walter. *Types of Children's Literature*. World Book Co., 1919.

Craik, Dinah M. M. *Fairy Book*, Macmillan, 1926.

De la Mare, Walter. *Told Again*. Knopf, 1937.

Eaton, Anne T. *Reading with Children*. Viking, 1940.

Frank, Josette. *What Books for Children?* Doubleday, Doran, 1937.

Gask, Lillian. *Folk Tales from Many Lands*. Crowell.

Grimm, J. L. K. *Household Tales*. Macmillan, 1928.

Harris, J. C. *Told by Uncle Remus*. Country Life Press, 1905.

Jacobs, Joseph. *English Fairy Tales*. Burt.

Lang, Andrew. *The Orange Fairy Book*. Longmans, Green, 1906.

Rolleston, T. W. H. *Myths and Legends of the Celtic Race*. Harrap.

# This Year's Books For Children

## FICTION

**Hill of Little Miracles.** By Valenti Angelo. Illus. by the author. Viking, 1942. \$2.00.

A gentle story of every-day life among the Italian and Irish families who live on Telegraph Hill, in San Francisco.

**The Snow Queen.** By Hans Christian Andersen. Illus. by George and Doris Hauman. Macmillan, 1942. \$2.00.

Beautiful edition of this lovely old fairy tale.

**Bright Morning.** By Margery W. Bianco. Illus. by Margaret Platt. Viking, 1942. \$1.50.

Autobiographical account of a childhood in London in the late 1890's.

**Stooping Hawk and Stranded Whale, Sons of Liberty.** By Wilfrid S. Bronson. Illus. by the author. Harcourt, Brace, 1942. \$2.00.

A stirring tale of two boys of the unconquered Seri Indian tribe, who lived off the west coast of Mexico. The author is a scientist, an artist, and a gifted story-teller.

**Camp Hero.** By B. J. Chute. Decorations by Fred C. Rodewald. Macmillan, 1942.

A first-rate story for boys of 10-14, by the author of *Shattuck Cadet*.

**The White Horse.** By Elizabeth Coatsworth. Illus. by Helen Sewell. Macmillan, 1942. \$2.00.

This is the fourth story in which Sally appears. This time the crew and passengers of Captain Patterson's ship are taken prisoner by Barbary pirates. Written with Mrs. Coatsworth's characteristically sensitive perception

and evocative style, this book has also adventure, danger, and action to recommend it to young readers.

**The Middle Moffat.** By Eleanor Estes. Illus. by Louis Slobodkin. Harcourt, Brace, 1942. \$2.00.

These Moffats should be watched, for the family may become pretty important in junior literature. This book is funny to almost all ages—a rare quality indeed.

**Navy Diver.** By Gregor Felsen. Dutton, 1942. \$2.00.

Fiction based on authentic information.

**Bolek.** By Antoni Gronowicz. Trans. by Jessie McEwen. Illus. by Zhenya Gay. Nelson, 1942. \$2.50.

A Polish refugee writes this story of a young countryman's childhood, his ambition to become a violinist, and his escape to America. An exceptionally good book.

**The Hickory Limb.** By Margaret Ann Hubbard. Illus. by Dorothy Bayley. Macmillan, 1942. \$2.00.

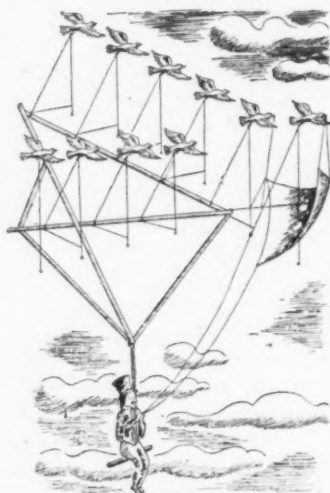
Swift, absorbing action in the Watauga Valley at the time of the Revolution. Noli-chucky Jack is one of the characters.

**Dixie Decides.** By May Justus. Illus. by Aldren A. Watson. Random House, 1942. \$2.00.

May Justus knows the people of the southern highlands, transcribes their idiom, and records their songs and sayings in a fine story for girls.

**Storm on the Island.** By Eleanor Frances Lattimore. Illus. by the author. Harcourt, Brace, 1942. \$1.75.

Pleasant realistic narrative for 9 to 12-year-olds.



From *Bag of Smoke*, by Lonzo Anderson. Viking

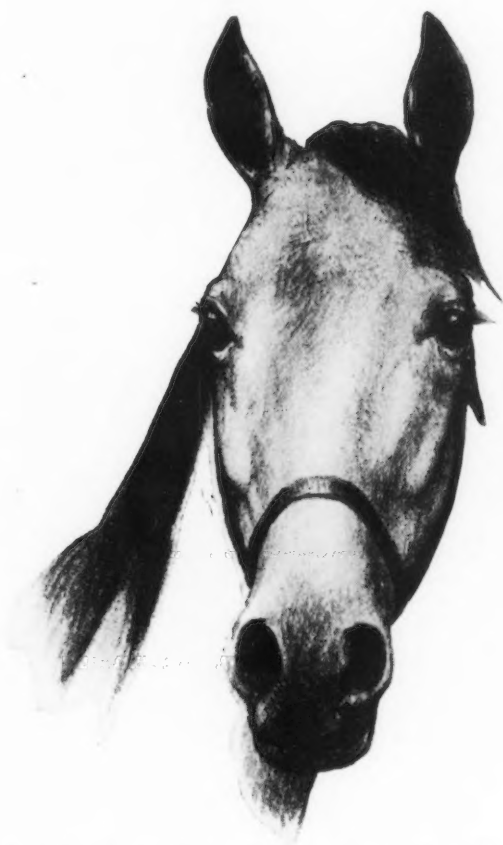


**Missee Lee.** By Arthur Ransome. Illus. Macmillan, 1942. \$2.50.

Another of the always-popular stories about Swallows and Amazons—those English children who have the very kind of good time that all children want. The setting is the China seas.

**Hill Lawyer.** By Hubert Skidmore. Illus. by Richard Bennett. Double, Doran, 1942. \$2.00.

Stirring action, and a generous social outlook characterize this story of the Blue Ridge country. For older boys.



From *Thoroughbreds*, by C. W. Anderson. Macmillan.

**All American.** By John R. Tunis. Illus. by Hans Walleen. Harcourt, Brace, 1942. \$2.00.

A football story, with enough action to win almost any literate youngster away from the comics.

**Canyon of No Sunset.** By Annette Turngren. Illus. by William B. Hamaker. Nelson, 1942. \$2.50.

A mystery for readers of 12 to 18, bound to be popular.

**Lions on the Hunt.** By Theodore J. Waldeck. Illus. by Kurt Wiese. Viking, 1942. \$2.00.

Absorbing story for boys and their fathers. The author knows the African veldt, which is the setting.

**They Loved to Laugh.** By Kathryn Worth. Illus. by Marguerite de Angeli. Doubleday, Doran, 1942. \$2.00.

North Carolina in the 1830's is the setting for this novel for high-school-age girls.

#### FACTS

**Thoroughbreds.** By C. W. Anderson. Illus. by the author. Macmillan, 1942. \$2.00.

**Bag of Smoke.** By Lonzo Anderson. Illus. by Adrienne Adams. Viking, 1942. \$2.00.  
Sub-title: The story of the first balloons.

**Man is a Weaver.** By Elizabeth Chesley Baity. Illus. by C. B. Falls. Viking, 1942. \$2.50.

The story of civilization as seen in the development of textiles, from those of the lake-dwellers down through the fine fabrics of the Orient, the industrial revolution, to modern textiles.

**It Works Like This.** By Burr Leyson. Illus. with diagrams and photographs. Dutton, 1942. \$2.50.

Diesel engines, blast furnances, electricity, in its various applications including the radio vacuum tube, television, etc.

**When I Grow Up I'll Be a Nurse.** By Lillian Rifkin. Illus. with photographs. Lothrop, Lee and Shepard. 1942. \$1.25.

**Bamboo, the Grass Tree.** By Armstrong Sperry. Illus. by the author. Macmillan, 1942. \$1.00.

**Coconut, the Wonder Tree.** By Armstrong Sperry. Illus. by the author. Macmillan, 1942. \$1.00.

**Parachutes.** By Herbert Zim. Illus. by James MacDonald. Harcourt, Brace, 1942. \$2.50.

**Submarines:** The story of undersea boats. By Herbert Zim. Illus. by James MacDonald. Harcourt, Brace, 1942. \$3.00.

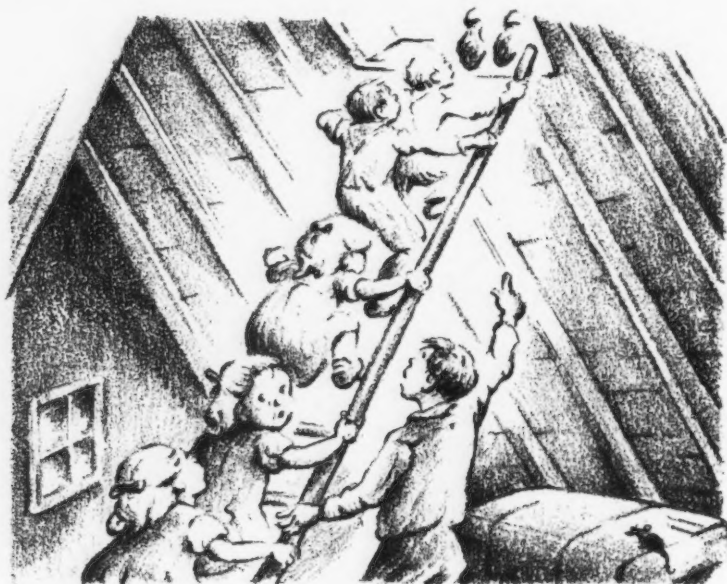
## PICTURE BOOKS

**The Fast Sooner Hound.** By Arna Bontemps and Jack Conroy. Illus. by Virginia Lee Burton. Houghton, Mifflin, 1942. \$1.75.

Excellent "tall tale" about a dog that could outrun a train.

**Michael Sebastian McKinley Smith.** By Josephine De Witt. Illus. by the author. Nelson, 1942.

The elements of the yarn are a flying lobster, Frank the fisherman, Liz his boat, and Mike, a tough black cat. Good nonsense.



From *Hundreds and Hundreds of Pancakes*, by Audrey Chalmers. Viking.

**Hundreds and Hundreds of Pancakes.** By Audrey Chalmers. Illus. by the author. Viking, 1942. \$1.00.

The Frizzlewit family are evidently literary relatives of the Tooseys and the Peterkins. Excellent fun.

**The Story of Pancho and the Bull with the Crooked Tail.** By Berta and Elmer Hader. Illus. by the authors. Macmillan, 1942. \$2.00.

**The Annie Moran.** By Edith Thacher Hurd. Illus. by Clement Hurd. Lothrop, Lee, and Shepard, 1942. \$1.00.

**Speedy, the Hook and Ladder Truck.** By Edith Thacher Hurd. Illus. by Clement Hurd. Lothrop, Lee and Shepard, 1942. \$1.25.

**Maria Rosa: Everyday fun and carnival frolic with children in Brazil.** By Vera Kelsey. Illus. by Candido Portinari. Doubleday, Doran, 1942. \$2.00.

**Count the Kittens.** By Dorothy N. King. Illus. by Joseph Sica. Harcourt, Brace, 1942. \$1.50.

A counting-board is made a part of the book.

**At the Seashore.** By N. W. Robinson. Illus. by Irene Robinson. Macmillan, 1942. \$2.00. Exceptionally beautiful drawings in color.

**The Little Red Lighthouse and the Great Gray Bridge.** By Hildegard Swift and Lynd Ward. Pictures with text. Harcourt, Brace, 1942. \$1.75.

**Hezekiah Horton.** By Ellen Tarry. Illus. by Oliver Harrington. Viking, 1942. \$1.00.

# The Elementary English Review Transferred to N.C.T.E.

**A**LMOST NINETEEN years ago C. C. Certain bravely launched a journal of a new kind—a specialists' magazine for the elementary school. Though its field was the very broad one of English, the undertaking was perilous, for elementary teachers have many subject fields to claim their attention and money, and there was no satisfactory organization of elementary teachers especially interested in English. Nevertheless Mr. Certain ventured, and with remarkable energy and a wide acquaintance he succeeded. *Review* subscribers do not need to have the performance of the magazine over all these years reviewed or praised.

Some years ago Mr. Certain formally recognized the assistance his wife was giving in the conduct of *The Review* by naming her associate editor. Since his untimely death she has successfully carried on in his spirit.

Now, however, Mrs. Certain has accepted appointment as a librarian in Lakewood, Ohio, and feels that she ought to relinquish the burdens of editing and promoting *The Review*. So she has sold the magazine to The National Council of

Teachers of English, which has already taken over the entire business management. Hereafter all communications for *The Review* should be addressed to The Council, or to *The Review*, at 211 West Sixty-eighth Street, Chicago. The acquisition of *The Review* comes at a fortunate moment for The Council, just when, without premonition of Mrs. Certain's action, it was making strong plans for increasing the number of its elementary-school members—for whom it would have had to buy *Review* subscriptions. These plans will now be carried on—under the immediate leadership of Dora V. Smith, of the University of Minnesota—with all possible vigor.

The transaction was completed only on August 31, and Mrs. Certain generously agreed to edit this issue of *The Review*. No further announcement concerning editorial direction can be made at this time, but subscribers may be assured that there will be no unhappy break with past policies.

—W. WILBUR HATFIELD  
Secretary, National Council of  
Teachers of English.

# Editorial

## BOOK WEEK — 1942

IN BOOK WEEK, 1941, two notable weeklies presented opposing platforms for children's reading in time of crisis; one urged reading *to understand* the world; the other, reading *to escape* from it. Surely in Book Week, 1942, with world tragedy drawing daily closer to the children of America and with conflicting purposes becoming daily more clearly defined, we cannot fail to adopt both slogans. Neither alone is sufficient.

In all probability, there never was a time when intelligent adults felt so ignorant as they do today. Whole areas of the world, unknown to us before, have suddenly sprung into our consciousness. Peoples beyond our ken have given evidence of an idealism akin to our own. Whole nations have proved their valor or demonstrated their treachery in ways to stir our admiration or to arouse our contempt. We have seen in the ideals of foreign nations a power over the human spirit which we covet for our own. We have felt with vague questioning of spirit an essential oneness with men whose culture and traditions differ widely from our own. We have watched men give up land and sea for conflict in the air, and we have come to an abrupt realization that the world is in actuality a sphere, and the strategic points on its surface may not be where we thought they were at all.

We fight to defend a faith in individual human worth and to establish among the nations of the world a manner of living together in harmony with that faith. We dare not let our children leave our schools as ignorant of their world and of the peoples with whom they must achieve these ends as we ourselves have proved to be. Above all, we must see to it that

within themselves they hold fast to the vision of freedom which is their inheritance, and to the spirit by which their forefathers translated that vision into reality.

Book Week is an excellent time to begin. Never did children's books present in attractive form a greater wealth of significant information. Never were they more adequate to inspire in boys and girls a sense of fellowship with children the world over and an admiration for the things in their culture which we lack in our own. Never were they more charged with emotion, sincere and restrained, in presenting to American children the heritage of freedom which is theirs to share and to extend.

Boys and girls need to understand their world; they need equally, on occasion, to escape from it—to lose themselves completely in tall tales replete with hilarious incident and good fun, in delirious absorption in stirring adventure or romance, and in stories of the power of the human spirit to press on in spite of insurmountable odds. The vogue of the comics in war time is a challenge to teachers everywhere. They present an avenue of escape, for the most part, cheap and vulgar; they are often prejudiced and intolerant in point of view; they frequently distort human experience in ways that teach little of significance about human nature and its manifestations in life. Right triumphs in the end, it is true, but only after wrong has been presented in lurid detail, when the hero, having taken the law into his own hands, has committed as many crimes in the cause of righteousness as has the clever villain in the interests of crime. Advertising campaigns abound to sell the comics, to convince



parents and teachers that the educational world is unanimous in its endorsement of the strips, and even to make the comics the avenue through which good books are made known to children. Book Week is a time to combat such enterprises by putting good, wholesome books appealing to the normal interests of boys and girls in the center of the stage, and by keeping the comics where they belong, on the periphery of the child's reading experience. We cannot hope to succeed in such a venture unless we offer in competition an ample supply of genuinely attractive titles which meet the vital needs of children for humor, for good comradeship, for thrilling adventure, and for a sense of personal achievement through heroes and heroines illustrative of their own potentialities.

This is the challenge of Book Week,

1942, to the teachers of America—that they sense the importance of children's books in laying foundations for a world at peace and in escaping from a world at war; that they exert every effort to acquaint themselves with the wealth of titles available for both purposes in order to share their knowledge and their enthusiasm with boys and girls; and that they join forces actively with parents and with librarians to make such books available to boys and girls.

To this stirring venture the elementary section of The National Council of Teachers of English and its official organ, *The Elementary English Review*, pledge whole-hearted support.

DORA V. SMITH, *Chairman,  
Elementary Section of The  
National Council of  
Teachers of English*

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